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Special Town Meeting

There will be a Special Town Meeting on October 19, 7:30PM, in the Abbot Gymnasium.

Visit

www.westfordma.gov
for current news and information.

Dear Westford Residents,

On October 19, 2009 we will hold our Fall Special Town Meeting in the Abbot gymnasium. All information regarding the warrant is available on our town website www.westfordma.gov. The warrant contains 14 articles for the town to act upon. A couple of articles allow us to balance the Fiscal Year 2010 budget. Article 2 asks voters to create a Department of Public Works (DPW) and hire a director. A formal DPW presentation may be found on our website which explains the proposal in detail. Three articles request to allow deferral or exemption of motor vehicle excise or property taxes for Massachusetts National Guardsmen and Reservists when they are on active duty. The school department is seeking funding to upgrade the Westford Academy treatment plant, and design a replacement roof on

the Nabnasset School. There is an article to address the change in town meeting date from May to March, and a request to update language in our Zoning Bylaws. National Grid is seeking an easement on Country Road for an electric pole to provide power to our new well, and there is a request to transfer care and custody of a parcel on Texas Road to the Conservation Commission. Finally, there is a citizen's petition asking the town to accept Vose Hill Road as a public way. Please attend our Special Town Meeting as this is your opportunity to vote on these important town issues.

On September 29th the Town Manager's Fiscal Year 2011 budget message was presented to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, with the full budget message available on our

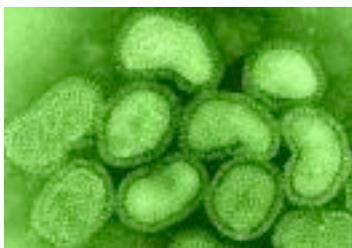
website. Through implementation of several expense reduction measures town-wide, we have been able to maintain a healthy financial position. We have strong cash reserves thanks to years of adherence to sound fiscal management policies. In this economic climate, we are cognizant that local receipts and new growth may remain low, and we are concerned that the state may further reduce its assistance to us. We want to assure all of you that we are committed to meeting these challenges and maintaining the current level of services wherever possible, by continuing to take measures to reduce or at least control expenses town-wide.

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Dear Westford Residents,

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"Most of you have heard reports about the H1N1 (Swine) Flu. Our Board of Health is diligently working on this issue to help protect us all."

Visit

[www.westfordma.gov/
publichealth/flu](http://www.westfordma.gov/publichealth/flu)

for more information.

I am pleased to report that the construction bids for the Town Hall renovation and expansion came in significantly under budget. We are in the process of finalizing the contracts, with construction scheduled to begin shortly thereafter. For those of you who visit us at our temporary location in the Millenium School, I am pleased to report that we added reserved parking spaces closer to the school with signs

limiting parking to those conducting town business.

Most of you have heard reports about the H1N1 (Swine) Flu. Our Board of Health is diligently working on this issue to help protect us all. I will be presenting a town policy to the selectmen on October 13th to insure we have a plan if the outbreak is significant, and that we do our part to prevent the further spread of this illness. Again, please check

our website for the most up-to-date information.

I hope you are taking full advantage of this gorgeous fall weather – this is why we call New England home! Take care, and I'll see you at town meeting.

Sincerely,

Jodi Ross

Fire Safety Message October 2009

October is Fire Prevention Month and each year in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire (October 8-9, 1871) the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has sponsored Fire Prevention week since 1922. Each October the NFPA promotes a campaign slogan focusing on the importance of fire safety education. This year's message

is "Stay Fire Smart" Don't get Burned.

Did you know?

Nationally in 2007:

U.S. fire departments responded to 399,000 home fires.

Home fires killed almost 2,900 people.

Someone was injured in a home fire every 39 minutes.

Roughly eight people died in home fires every day.

A fire department responded to a home fire every 79 seconds.

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Fire Safety Message October 2009

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According to Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System in 2008

There were 30,136 fires in MA

49 Civilian Deaths – a majority of these deaths occurred due to No Working Smoke / Carbon Monoxide alarms in the home!

One Firefighter death

337 Civilian injuries

622 Firefighter injuries

Estimated \$254 million dollars in property damage

Cooking equipment most involving kitchen stovetops account for more than one-third (38%) of reported home fires and fire injuries each year. Typical cooking fire occurs when cooking is left unattended. Smoking is still a leading cause of fire deaths in the United States, where 700-

900 deaths occur each year. Home heating is a leading cause of home fire deaths where almost half (44%) of home heating equipment fires were reported during the months of December, January, and February¹.

Safety Tips

Make sure your home has working smoke / carbon monoxide alarms

Test your alarms once a month

Practice home fire escape plans twice a year

Stay in the kitchen when cooking

Have heating equipment professionally inspected and serviced every year

Have your chimneys cleaned and inspected before each heating season

Further fire prevention information is available at each of the Westford Fire Stations.

Links

www.cpsc.gov/CPSC/PUB/PUBS/ladder.html

www.osha.gov/Publications/portable_ladder_qc.html

www.consumerreports.org/cro/home-garden/nes/augus-2006/ladder-safety

Remember **Be Safe, be smart and change your batteries in your smoke & carbon monoxide alarms when you change your clock.**

Respectfully,
Donald R. Parsons
Fire Prevention Officer



*“Remember **Be Safe, be smart and change your batteries in your smoke & carbon monoxide alarms when you change your clock.** “*



Fall greetings from the Westford Highway Department

After a very short but busy summer, the Westford Highway Department is in full swing of Fall operations. We've been able to complete brush cutting along the Town's roadways, street sweeping operations, Town wide catch basin cleaning and have completed our paving program for the season. Additionally, several trees in the Town's Right of Way have been trimmed back or removed because they were either dead or diseased. The Westford Highway Department will be conducting its annual Brush Chipping Day for residents at \$10 per load at the new Highway Garage, 28 North Street, on Saturday, October 24, 2009 from 10:30 am until 4:30 pm. Branches must be no larger than 3 inches in diameter and 10 feet in length. Only reasonable amounts will be accepted. No commercial quantities. Proof of residency is required.

\$10 CASH fee per load. Building materials (i.e. fences, boards), land clearing materials, debris (roots, bushes, brush mixed with poison ivy), leaves, pine needles, grass clippings will not be accepted. Residents may dispose of yard waste by the following means (Courtesy of Westford Recycles): Leaves & Grass Clippings (Yard waste)

Ways to Dispose of Yard Waste

- Red Wagon Landscaping is again offering professional curbside leaf pick up. Rates: On average most yards are about \$100 to \$150 for each pick-up, depending on the amount of leaves. This cost includes any disposal fees. Please see the Red Wagon Landscaping website for details

- Bring to: Jones Farm, 246 Acton Rd (Route 27) in Chelmsford. Cost per biodegradable paper bag is \$1.50 when you bring your own

bags (no plastic bags accepted). Jones Farm sells pre-paid paper bags for \$1.50 each and there is no additional charge when you drop them off. Call 978-256-8065 for details about: Pick-up, Rake and Take and large quantity drop-off options. Hours: Mon.- Sun. 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

- Bring to: Eric's Garden Center, 68 Boston Rd, Westford. Cost per biodegradable bag is \$2.00. Only grass clippings and leaves are accepted.

- Bring to: BMC, Corp. composting facility in Tewksbury, MA. Contact BMC at 781-273-0398 or 978-667-2171 or go to the BMC website for directions and additional information. BMC will not be selling stickers - residents will pay per yard (leaves \$5 per yard, brush \$10 per yard, grass clippings free). Hours: Mon.- Fri. 7a.m. - 4p.m., Saturday 7a.m. - 12p.m.

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Westford Highway Department

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•Let grass clippings remain on the lawn. Clippings decompose and fertilize the soil. For your next mower, consider a mulching mower which produces very small clippings.

•A light covering of leaves on the grass can be mowed. They will decompose and fertilize the soil.

•Use clippings and leaves as mulch around trees and shrubs. Leaves are Nature's own choice for mulch. Many web sites offer tips on how to use clippings as mulch.

•Compost leaves and grass clippings. The resulting compost can be used to fertilize trees, shrubs and gardens. Discounted compost bins are available from a Recycling Commission member, 978-692-5483.

The Highway Department would like to remind residents not to place leaves in the Towns Right of Way and to keep catch basins in front of your property

free of leaves and debris. Your help is sincerely appreciated! **NOTICE TO RESIDENTS AND CONTRACTORS:** November 15th is the deadline for Street Opening Permits. Absolutely NO excavation in the Town Right of Ways, except for emergencies, from November 15, 2009 through April 15, 2010.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

*Who can I call after hours to report potentially hazardous roadway conditions?

Please contact the Westford Police at 978-692-2161 for after hours emergency situations concerning Westford roadways. A Dispatcher will contact standby Highway personnel.

*How do I report a burnt out streetlight?

For above ground wiring, contact National Grid at 800-322-322 or visit their

web site:

https://www.nationalgridus.com/masselectric/account/forms/stl_outage.asp

♦ For underground wiring contact the Highway Dept. at 978-692-5520.

* How can I get a utility wire fixed near my house?

The Town is not responsible for utility wires. The utility companies also fix low hanging wires. The top wire is usually for electricity, the middle wire is usually for the phone, and the lowest is for cable. Highway Department employees are not equipped to go near high voltage wires. If there is a tree limb on an electric wire, contact National Grid at 800-322-3223.

* How do I report a downed branch in the road not affected by utility wires?

Contact the Highway Department at 978-692-5520.

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Westford Highway Department

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***Who is responsible for Street signs?**

Street signs are placed and maintained by the Highway Department. Regulatory signs (speed zones, stop signs etc.) are requested through the Police Department. Due to budget constraints Advisory signs (blind driveway etc.) are no longer provided by the Highway Department. We caution residents that due to the proliferation of signs, most signs have little impact and placing them in front of other resident's homes can become an issue.

***Is the State responsible for any**

roads in Westford?

Yes. Route 110 (Littleton Rd.), Powers Rd. and a portion of Boston Rd. by Route 495 are maintained by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and are therefore not under the care of the Westford Highway Dept. For questions regarding these roadways (potholes, obstructions and such) contact MassHighway at 508-754-7204.

*** My trash/recycling did not get picked up. Who do I call?**

You must put your trash or recycling at the curb by 7 a.m. on your designated pickup day. Holidays

one day late. If you have a problem you can call:

Trash pickup – ACME Waste Systems – 781-935-6339

Recycle pickup: - Integrated Paper Recyclers – 781-933-3013
Town Clerk – 978-692-5515

***Who can I call to remove a dead animal?**

The Highway Dept. is not responsible for picking up dead animals. You can contact the Animal Control Officer at 978-692-4574.

ASSESSORS' OFFICE

Everyone has been listening to the news media over the last year regarding real estate values. Often times these reports look at state wide averages, properties listed for sale, marketing time, and number of actual sales as compared to the previous year. The

problem, as we see it, is that the sensationalism of these reports over shadows the actual contents, and the information is being delivered in sound bites rather than in full form. Your FY 2010 assessments are based on calendar year 2008 sales not

calendar year 2009. We must consider one full year of sales in establishing assessments and this is part of the annual interim revaluation.

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ASSESSORS' OFFICE

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Looking at averages state wide or regionally does not truly consider what the market actually is in Westford. Is it really accurate to report Westford market activity with our immediate regional neighbors such as Chelmsford, Tyngsboro, or Lowell? While these towns have shown greater or significant decreases in value, they do not in any way, reasonably indicate the Westford market. Yes, there have been some declining values in Westford, but on the whole they have been minimal. There have been few foreclosures and short sales in Westford and as our sales data shows, most legitimate or qualified sales are still within a close range of our assessments.

Often times the news media portrays huge decline in prices, but we have found that they are usually referring to listing prices not actual sale prices, or are also

looking at a properties that were overpriced and took longer to sell. Listing prices do not affect your assessments nor are they considered in setting assessments. Only actual sales that are considered "arms length transactions" are used in determining assessments. After the crazy market of past years, marketing times have changed and are longer. However, the tendency has been to expect a house to sell within weeks and not months as was the case. Typical marketing time is usually 3-6 months, and if a property is priced reasonably, it will usually sell during this time frame. A property which is overpriced eventually will have price reductions until it reaches a point of reasonableness. Marketing times will also be much longer than a property that is priced reasonably.

So what can you expect to see in your

January actual tax bill? Most properties may see lower assessments. Some will reflect minimal declines and some will be moderate. However, some properties may see an increase in assessments based on sales for their respective neighborhoods or through market corrections because data over a 2 year period suggests that they may have been somewhat under assessed. Does this means your taxes will go down if your assessment went down? The answer is, not likely. You may think that this is unfair, but your taxes are directly impacted by what Town Meeting as a body approves. Only Town Meeting action impacts how the town appropriates and spends your tax dollars and how it will reflect in the Tax Levy. The Tax Levy directly affects your real estate and personal property taxes.

The short explanation of the Tax Levy is this is the balance leftover after all other sources of revenue have been considered or calculated. Or: Approved Town Budget less all Other Sources of Revenue equals the Tax Levy. Therefore, participation in Town Meeting is important by all. Your voice. Your vote.



COUNCIL ON AGING

We invite you to join us for a host of activities at the Senior Center temporary location of 10 Church St. in the United Methodist Church. Our entrance is ground level and in the rear of the building. 10 Church St. is in the Graniteville section of town. Pre-registration is necessary for most activities and we can be reached Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. at 978 692-5523.

The offerings include information and referrals for home care services, health insurance counseling with S.H.I.N.E., Lawyer, Realtor, Money Managers and Financial Planners presentations check out our newsletter at www.westfordma.gov/coa Transportation is provided locally and throughout the area with our accessible vans by calling in advance to 978 399-2322 and leaving your name, address, phone number and exact location with date and time on where you need to be transported to. Our dispatcher will return your phone call with a confirmation time for the trip.

Our programs (location at Senior Center unless noted and reservations are required) are varied and we are always looking for additional participants and suggestions for new offerings. Our first Women's Breakfast will meet on Thursday, October 29th at 8:30. Chelmsford Crossings will provide the breakfast which will include omelet's made to order. We will discuss the format and frequency of these breakfasts at our first meeting. Men's Breakfast is Tuesday, October 13th, 8 a.m. with guest speaker Kathleen Laferriere, RN, BSN, CCRN, Cardiac Health Educator for Lowell General Hospital. Ask the Realtor with local real estate agent Kathy Cunningham of Coldwell Banker will be present, Monday, Oct. 19th from 10 – 11 a.m. to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding real estate matters. Community Food Pantry is available to those in need of food on Monday October 19 and Wednesday, October 21st from 1 – 3:30 p.m. or Thursday, October 15th, 8 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.. Blood Pressure reading, medication review, weight check and an opportunity to

have other concerns reviewed on Tuesday, October 13, 9:30 -10:30 and Wednesday, October 28, 8 – 10 a.m. Focus on Fixed Income educational seminar will be presented by a Financial Advisor from the Edward Jones Office in Westford on October 22nd at 2 p.m. with dessert provided by Life Care Center of Nashoba Valley. Property tax payments will be received here with an individual from the Tax Collector's office Wednesday, October 28 from 11:30 – 12:30.

Aerobics each Wednesday at 9 and Friday at 8:30. Art class with all mediums used on Wed. at 9 a.m. We are starting a Body Movement Fitness class which includes dance and aerobics with emphasis on grace and balance begins Monday, October 19th at 10:30. BINGO Friday evenings 6:45 – 9 with doors open early. Bookmobile has scheduled a stop at the Senior Center Wednesday, October 21st at 10:45. Contract Bridge each Friday 12:30 – 4 p.m. Duplicate Bridge once a month on the third Monday 12:30 - 4 p.m. with pre-registration with Peter at 978 692-8383. Knitting and crocheting with great conversation each

Monday and Wednesday 1 -3 p.m. Canasta every Thursday 1 -3:30 p.m. Chair exercise Tuesday and Thursday 10:45 – 11:30. Cribbage Wednesday 1 – 3 p.m. Lunch with a minimum of 2 days reservation. MAH JONGG recently started on Wednesday at 1 p.m. and please bring along your tile set if you have one. Scrabble plays on Tuesday from 1 – 3:30.

Upcoming day trips include Tuesday, November 10th to "Foxwoods" and Tuesday, December 15th "A Salem Cross Christmas and Brilliant Bright Lights Display" includes lunch and much more. Call for reservations at 978 692-5523 and additional information.